

Preserving the Past and Ensuring The Future: The Old Colony Restoration Project

What Happened to Old Colony?

When the Old Colony Railroad made its first run, Abraham Lincoln was still studying law-books by candlelight in his Illinois log cabin and America was on the brink of war with Mexico. Legendary statesmen John Quincy Adams and Daniel Webster were on board for that first trip which began in Boston and finished in Plymouth. Ironically, today in 1997, over 150-years later, we will be again celebrating the 'first run' of Old Colony.

Acquiring its name from the appellation used by the Pilgrims to describe the Southeastern corner of Massachusetts, Old Colony was one of the original railroad lines in the United States. From 1845 through 1959, Old Colony provide dedicated service to and from the South Shore and Boston.

First balked at by some residents and politicians, the Old Colony Railroad became a major cog in the economic, social and cultural development of the South Shore region. In fact, the modest population of Quincy in 1845, which was about 2,000 grew astronomically to over 70,000 by 1930—a feat that was no doubt aided by the existence of Old Colony.

When Old Colony was phased out in 1959, the new Southeast Expressway was introduced. People abandoned the antiquated railroad in favor of the modern artery. The automobile became the mode of choice for most South Shore residents while the archaic rails of Old Colony slipped into the past.

Now, after almost 4 decades of increased congestion and population growth, it is the Southeast Expressway that is antiquated. The beleaguered roadway is coming down and the rejuvenated rails are back in action. Even before the construction began, the Central Artery had become a slow-moving quagmire of cars, cabs, and trucks. Once construction got underway, the situation only got worse. Ironically, it is the new Old Colony Railroad to the rescue.

Importance to the Past, Present, and Future

Having carried businessmen, dignitaries, whalers, vacationers, travelers, and soldiers from 6 wars, including the nation's first Civil War volunteers, between the South Shore and Boston, the rails and pathways of Old Colony are as much a part of history as the walls that surround the State House or the pantheon of local politicians from Ben Franklin to John F. Kennedy.

While the MTA knew that the restoration of Old Colony would preserve the railroad's place in history, that was 2nd only to how its restoration would secure its place in the future. Enhancing the quality of life, its presence will spawn business growth, provide an essential link between extant businesses along the corridors, and bring the South Shore back within the Boston scope. Also its impact on the environment will be noticeable as the adjoining roadways—which are now unpreparedly and implausibly congested with thousands of South Shore commuters—will clear and restore the rural elements that had been accosted by the heavy traffic.

The return of the Old Colony is a tremendous plus for an already booming South Shore community. Its presence has created over one thousand new jobs during construction as well as ensured several hundred long-term operating and maintenance jobs when the railroad begins. Area real estate offices are reporting a significant rise in property values and residencies. Once Old Colony is up and running these rates will only

increase.

Plugging the South Shore Back into Boston: The Restoration

The restoration process started rolling in 1984 when the Massachusetts State Legislature, in an effort to ease roadway congestion, directed the MBTA to conduct a feasibility study for the re-opening of the once abandoned Old Colony Railroad. The results showed that bringing Old Colony back would help combat some of the congested expressway problems. The final approval was issued by the Secretary of Environmental Affairs in May, 1992 and construction was soon underway.

Designing and installing a railroad system is no small affair. Its construction represents the successful culmination of 27 contracts with 12 general contractors and virtually hundreds of subcontractors, vendors, and material suppliers. With over 62 miles of rehabilitated track, 27 rehabilitated and reconstructed bridges, one newly constructed bridge over the Neponset River, and one tunnel underpass in Kingston, the effort to revitalize Old Colony was a massive undertaking that required significant cooperation from government officials, legislature, MBTA officials, contractors, and South Shore residents.

When it begins its full-service schedule, Old Colony will serve over 30 South Shore communities spanning approximately 450 square miles and reaching about 600,000 people. It will carry an estimated 15,000 passengers daily, thus removing at least 10,000 cars from the roadways. This alleviation will allow for some much-needed breathing room for the Central Artery Project. Once the Central Artery Project is finished it will work in balance with Old Colony to create an all-inclusive transportation network and give the South Shore more than one viable option for travel.

All along Old Colony's tracks, the abutting properties are looking bright and decorative as the proud owners of the many homes and businesses are doing their own revitalization in anticipation of railroad service.

Getting to Know the Residents and Roadways: Safety First

The main focus of the Old Colony project, from its inception through its implementation, is to ensure the safety of the passengers and people of the communities through which the trains will run. The MBTA has spent countless hours of testing both the trains and the system.

The MBTA's Safety Department has played a significant role in the Old Colony Project in conjunction with Operation Lifesaver, an aggressive outreach program in which almost 47,000 persons have participated.

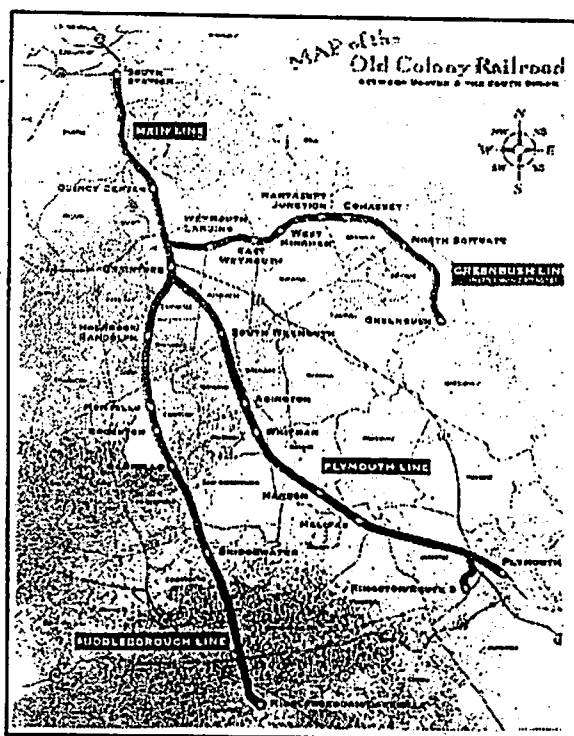
The MBTA Old Colony Communications Office in Braintree is open 5 days a week, either by phone or walk-in, and they are always willing to listen. The MBTA realizes that success of Old Colony can only come from its customers and so the people at the MBTA have taken some unprecedented steps in communication.

Laying Down the Final Pieces

Once complete, the Old Colony line on the South Shore will represent the last quadrant of Greater Boston to receive commuter rail service. The fastest growing region in Massachusetts is growing even faster thanks to Old Colony. It is no coincidence that the renewed interest in South Shore comes alongside Old Colony's return to ridership.

With its historical relevance intact, Old Colony Railroad is ready to impact the lives of thousands in the South Shore and to embark into a new era, the 21st-Century. Indeed, there is a certain historical fitness in that one of America's oldest railroads has now become one of its newest.

Old Colony Railroad



PLYMOUTH LINE

TRAINS

INBOUND	032	034	036	038
READ DOWN	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.
Dep: Plymouth				
Dep: Kingston	5:45	6:25	7:05	7:45
Halifax	5:55	6:35	7:15	7:55
Hanson	6:02	6:42	7:22	8:02
Whitman	6:08	6:48	7:28	8:08
Abington	6:12	6:52	7:32	8:12
South Weymouth	6:20	7:00	7:40	8:20
Braintree	6:29	7:09	7:49	8:29
Quincy Center				
Arr: South Station	6:50	7:30	8:10	8:50
OUTBOUND	033	035	037	039
READ DOWN	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.
Dep: South Station	4:20	5:00	5:40	6:30
Quincy Center				
Braintree	4:39	5:19	5:59	6:49
South Weymouth	4:47	5:27	6:07	6:57
Abington	4:54	5:34	6:14	7:04
Whitman	4:58	5:38	6:18	7:08
Hanson	5:04	5:44	6:24	7:14
Halifax	5:11	5:51	6:31	7:21
Arr: Kingston	5:25	6:05	6:45	7:35
Arr: Plymouth				